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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9682  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2965  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0785  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0661  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1238  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001223

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MARKINGS PARAS 8&10)

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, ECA, IIP, DRL  
ENERGY FOR EKIMOF/THOMPSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [EAID](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: STATE TV REQUESTS U.S. EXPERTS FOR  
TRAINING

REF: ASHGABAT 1188

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11. (U) This is an action request. See para nine below.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Post's PAO had an especially productive and open meeting with a Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting official that demonstrated a firm commitment and desire for tangible movement on President Berdimuhamedov's recent calls for improving state media through exchanges, training, creativity, and possibly competition or self-financing (reftel). Although the meeting was arranged to discuss an English-language broadcasting program, both sides explored other areas of cooperation with generally positive support about the many "good ideas." The meeting also included a rare, specific request for Embassy assistance for broadcast journalism training. END SUMMARY.

UNEXPECTED BUT WELCOME MEETING

13. (U) On November 6, the Public Affairs Section received a call from Agadurdy Akmuradov, head of the International Relations Department of the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting. He requested a meeting later the same day to discuss a recent Embassy proposal to develop an educational TV program that will teach basic English. He added that he had other requests. Significantly, the meeting was held without a Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative.

PROMISE OF DIRECT WORKING CONTACT

14. (U) Akmuradov told PAO that the English for TV program was approved and he said he would soon assign a TV crew from

state media's "Yaslyk" channel that the Embassy could start to work directly with. (NOTE: this would likely entail the deepest access and closest cooperation with state TV, ever. END NOTE.) He mentioned that this would support the President's efforts to develop TV, but almost in passing noted that the program's content should not be ideological.

#### OTHER IDEAS FROM THE TURKMEN

15. (SBU) Akmuradov noted President Berdimuhamedov's direct interest in improving state media and the cultural sphere and frequently referred to supporting the president's vision as both sides offered additional ideas to expand cooperation. Akmuradov specifically requested that Embassy bring a U.S. TV producer/director or other television experts for about two weeks to teach in a Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting training program for local TV producers that, in all, will last up to 10 months.

16. (SBU) Akmuradov praised the recent TV-Coop project which sent a TV crew to the United States in June and resulted in a three-part documentary series broadcast in September. In emphasizing that creativity was important, Akmuradov said that Turkmenistan should send a younger TV crew for the next TV Coop, so that they could better "absorb American creativity," implying that existing TV journalists lack the potential to become more creative.

17. (U) In addition, Akmuradov noted that he will receive approval soon for next year's festivals and conferences. He promised to pass it to the Embassy quickly, stressing that they hope for U.S. participation in each. He also hoped that the Embassy could facilitate greater exchange with Francine Levine, a New Mexico museum specialist who recently attended a museum conference in Ashgabat. Akmuradov even noted that they were putting a hold on a French proposal for cultural preservation in favor of trying to develop a program with their new colleagues in New Mexico.

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18. (SBU) PAO noted several U.S. Government programs related to journalism and news media. Akmuradov welcomed the idea of meeting with USAID representatives to discuss possible cooperation under the Internews program. PAO described the basic Eurasia Foundation program, which Akmuradov acknowledged (somewhat less enthusiastically) as something to consider. (NOTE: Eurasia Foundation's previous projects in Turkmenistan were closed, and the organization has many "negatives" in the eyes of the government which would normally lead to an outright dismissal of any project with the group. END NOTE.) Akmuradov again noted that Turkmenistan state media should pursue any opportunities that would fulfill the President's goals of invigorating media and culture. With those thoughts he asked for a detailed proposal to be passed via diplomatic note. Akmuradov added that he personally would look at the proposal, and they would select which program elements the government would find most agreeable or beneficial.

19. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Public Affairs Section (PAS) requests a U.S. Specialist in TV broadcasting to provide two weeks of training at the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting as soon as possible after the winter holidays. PAS will provide further details to SCA/PPD by e-mail.

110. (SBU) COMMENT: It is quite remarkable that state TV would ask for U.S. assistance. We want to respond by using public diplomacy U.S. Specialists, rather than through existing journalism training programs provided by NGOs like Internews or Eurasia Foundation. Russian black propaganda about so-called Color Revolutions has smeared those and other democracy NGOs as part of the U.S. covert plan to overthrow existing governments in the Former Soviet Union. Any attempt to try to insert trainers from those kinds of NGOs would raise Ministry of National Security suspicion, and could

scuttle the program before it begins. One more reason to work with Turkmenistan in a way that maintains their comfort level -- we know the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting already supports journalism training for its staff in China, and will soon start a similar program with Iran. We do not want those countries that hinder freedom of speech to be the only trainers for Turkmenistani state TV. END COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND